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SUBSTANCE OF

AN ADDRESS.

ON THE OPENING OF

THE LIMERICK SCHOOL OF ART,

ON TUESDAY, THE 26TH DAY OF OCTOBER, 1852,

BY THE PRESIDENT,

THE LORD MONTEAGLE, F. R. S.

LIMERICK :

GEORGE M'KERN AND SONS, PRINTERS, GEORGE-STREET.

1852.

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LIMERICK SCHOOL OF ORNAMENTAL ART.

A Public Meeting was held in the large rooms, No. 97, George-street, on the 26th of October, 1852, preparatory to opening the school for pupils. A large assemblage of Ladies and Gentlemen were present, among whom we observed—The Lord Bishop of Limerick, Sir Vere De Vere, Bart., Sir Matthew Barrington, Bart., Sir Richard Bourke, K.C.B., William Monsell, M.P., Wyndham Goold, M.P., J. Ball, M.P., Richard Russell, William Howly, Ven. Archdeacon Keating, Doctor Geary, Major Gavin, Doctor Gore, Doctor Brodie, Alderman J. M'Donnell, Patrick M'Namara, Joseph Robinson, James M'Mahon, John Going, Patrick M'Donnell, Rev. Mr. Stavely, John Long, C.E., Rev. Mr. Tarbotton, Rev. J. Synan, Rev. Dr. O'Brien, Alderman Dawson, J. B. Kennedy, Alderman Shannon, S. Hastings, Edward J. Corbett, R. M'Clure, Rev. H. O'Farrell, Rev. Mr. Fitzgerald, O.S.F. Rev. Mr. Cosgrave, Rev. Mr. Maunsell, Rev. Mr. Lewis, Doctor Ryding, E. F. Nagle, Rev. J. Moore, P.P. Rev. R. Moore, &c.

At Two o'Clock the Chair was taken by the Noble President, Lord Monteagle. The Report of the Committee having been read by Mr. Robert Anglim, Hon. Secretary, its adoption was proposed by the Lord Bishop of Limerick, and seconded by the Worshipful Thomas Kane, Mayor of Limerick, and the Chairman in submitting it to the Meeting, delivered the following address :—

MY LORD, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN,

IT is my duty to submit to you the question which has been proposed by my Right Rev. friend, the Lord Bishop of Limerick, seconded by his Worship, the Mayor, and to ask your adoption of the Report which has just been read. Perhaps this is the most fitting opportunity which I can take to comply with the desire of my colleagues in the direction and management of THE LIMERICK SCHOOL OF DESIGN, and to make some observations on the objects of that Institution, on the benefits which it holds out to the public, the duties and responsibilities it casts upon its founders, and the privileges it confers upon its students. Hereafter, it is to be hoped, that an address like the present will become less necessary, as I fully expect that our future Annual Reports, containing an account of our pro-

ceedings, and our progress, may, when laid before you and the public, supersede the necessity of any address from your President. At our outset, we are unable to draw upon the past; we can only deal with the present, and with the future: at the same time it cannot but be encouraging to know that the work in which we are engaged is carried on under the sanction of the State, and is assisted by Parliament, nor is this public aid and countenance the less valuable when we can associate and trace it thankfully to the zeal and exertions of friends and neighbours of our own, known and respected in their capacity of our Representatives in the House of Commons. This is one of the many instances in which the institutions of a free country, and the representative system on which they rest, are bound up with important popular interests and the improvement of all classes around us. Our best acknowledgments for the aid thus granted will, hereafter, I feel confident, be found in the satisfactory, truthful, and practical Reports we shall be enabled to make of the rapid extension of our School, and the improvement of all who attend its lectures, and profit by its instruction. Such results will be infinitely more encouraging and useful than any suggestion which I can make at the present. They will have more force and life than any reasoning *a priori*. In Imitative Art, even more truly than in most other branches of study, experience will be found our best teacher, and the truest witness to the usefulness of our Institution. An opening discourse even if proceeding from one better qualified for the task than I can be, is necessarily less important and less interesting than similar addresses will be hereafter. Though conscious of the difficulties of my present position, I shall endeavour to surmount them, and shall justify my recommendation of our infant Institution, by a reference to the principles on which it rests, and by examples drawn from other countries where those principles have been recognised.

Permit me, however, in the first place, to return you my thanks for having selected me as your first President, though I must add, and that without any mock modesty, but in all truth and simplicity, that I would have wished your choice had fallen on one better qualified. On receiving from your respected Secretary an intimation of your kindness, whilst I informed him that I should, unreservedly, place myself at the disposal of the Institution, I also stated my regret that your selection had not been made of one more fitted by his acquirements to serve you, and who by constant residence in this city, uninterrupted by Parliamentary attendance, or by official duties, might have shown himself a more efficient President. I do not mean to admit that any one would be more eager and anxious to

serve you than myself, but you would have done more wisely to secure the services of one who with equal desire to forward the objects of our School, had better qualifications for doing so, and who would have had better opportunities of taking a steady, active, and continuous share in your deliberations and acts.

I have applied the words "*steady, active, and continuous*," advisedly, as descriptive of the duties which ought to be performed by your President; but not by him alone. These words are applicable to us all, and they should be invariably kept in mind by the Committee, by the Instructor, and by the future Pupils of our School of Design. Now some acquaintance with human affairs, from a long experience in Irish public business, and not without some knowledge also of Limerick, and of its inhabitants, I take the liberty of saying that it is unwise and unsafe to believe too implicitly in the old latin maxim, which declares that a work is half completed which is well begun. In Ireland I never doubt seeing a strenuous and energetic beginning. But however encouraging this may be, I warn you, respectfully, that if you do not labor hard, and if you do not persevere with patience, your practical object will not be accomplished. Indeed the result of your opening will be represented better by negative than by positive signs. Without a resolution to persevere steadily, it were far better not to have undertaken the task before us. All experience shows us that our countrymen are fickle and lively, as well as imaginative; ready to embark zealously in any enterprise which appears noble and attractive. But how often do we find the same enterprise, upon a slight discouragement, still more rashly abandoned than it had been thoughtlessly undertaken. I, therefore, would impress upon you a vigorous determination to persevere, and to overcome all obstacles which may arise, as the only means to bring your labors to a successful issue. This recommendation is sound, believe me, and it is made necessary by all our past local experience, as well as by more general examples.

Our Institution is based upon a sound principle. It is recommended by experience, both in our own and in other countries. I call upon you therefore, unhesitatingly, to sanction, to assist, to encourage it. I call on you to do so, for your own sakes, and for the sake of the classes connected with trade and industry, in whose well being, I am convinced, you feel a deep and affectionate interest, and whom it is our object to enlighten, to instruct, and to elevate; I also call upon you to make this Institution worthy of our great city, not only for our own benefit, but for the benefit of others not represented among us. We should remember that ours is

but one of many similar Institutions established by Parliament throughout our land. Our failure would be injurious to them all, as well as discreditable to ourselves—our success will contribute to their progress. Consider yourselves therefore, as trustees for all your countrymen, as well as active labourers for the good of Limerick. But I go further. Consider yourselves trustees for the national character of Ireland. For if our School should fail by reason of what has been often pointed out as a defect in our national character—if we fail from a want of persevering industry—that failure throws a stigma on the character of Irishmen generally, as well as of those whom I am now addressing. Another fatal consequence would be, that by our remissness, we might discourage Parliament from executing what stands pre-eminent amongst its most pressing, though least ostentatious duties, namely, the improvement of the moral, social, and intellectual condition of Her Majesty's subjects of all classes.

I shall now proceed to make some observations on the objects which we all have in view, in the foundation of Institutions like the present. Our object is to raise the industrious classes to the exigencies of the present times of rapid progress, and unrestricted competition. We do not live under ordinary circumstances. Every day is now a day of discovery; every new book gives us the history of some new invention. All practical knowledge, therefore, becomes the excitement to new efforts, by shewing its necessity. Nor are the efforts now required those of mere physical industry.—We belong to an age of rapidly advancing civilization, where the mind is as necessary as the arms and the hands of man. If industry is to prosper, to whatsoever objects directed, we must keep pace with the progress of the times—we must increase in knowledge—we must profit by the developments of science. If we do not move according to the progressive character of the age, the very elements of advancement will be our destruction: our condition will be made worse by all that ought to contribute to our prosperity. Time was when the physical powers of man alone were sufficient to supply his physical wants, and when he sought no more—when

“ Wild through the woods the noble savage ran.”

These times are passed away. There is nothing about us but has experienced a change; we require more, and we must do more, and must do better. Man is daily becoming more and more an intellectual agent; and if he does not enter on his career with a determination and honest ambition to advance according to the progressive character of the times in which he lives, he must inevitably be beaten by more active competitors. I think it is

Lord Bacon who says truly, that man cannot stand still, and that if he does not go onward, he must fall back ; and this is not less the case with classes and nations than with individuals. We cannot look around us without recognising this fact. Many of those whom I address recollect well, and that at a period not very remote, when a journey from hence to Waterford or Dublin was measured by days and nights, tedious travelling, and delays at every stage. Fatigue, langour, and exhaustion followed, when we were dependant on our old friend, the Contractor, “the *Bourne*, by whom each traveller returned.” At present we are freed both from Mr. Bourne and his inn at Kilmastulla. We travel on the wings of steam if not on the wings of the wind. We have recourse to agencies whose powers are almost as boundless as they are safe and rapid. On our arrival at Dublin, we are fresh and prepared either for the business or the pleasure which has been the motive of our visit to the metropolis. I only allude to this common place illustration, as suggesting an analogy which applies to all our pursuits and duties. In our time the whole world around us resembles a Railway ;—All things are in rapid motion, and we must resort to the engine which conveys others, or submit to be left far behind. But on the intellectual journey which I would urge to undertake, we need not fear the explosion of a high-pressure engine, nor yet a collision with another train. We may secure for our purposes the power and the inventions of science, without the fear of ordinary Railway accidents : we may combine the progress and appliances of our time with steadiness and with safety ; and I hope I may congratulate you, on what you have done, and are still doing, to secure for your own benefit modern improvements of no unimportant description, which exhibit the progress we are making. Had the Masons of Limerick some 30 or 40 years ago been called upon to produce plans for markets in this city, I doubt whether they could have furnished you with designs as admirable as those which I rejoice to think have lately been adopted, and which will be a new ornament to our City.

I can now look back with the experience of half a century ; I see in this assembly some of my contemporaries and fellow labourers, and I ask them when we first walked along the banks and quays of our river, whether we could have ventured to anticipate the erection of our beautiful bridge, our wide and excellent wharfage, and above all, the splendid floating docks, which are approaching their completion, under the scientific direction of our friend and associate, Mr. Long. In dwelling on these proofs of the advances we have already made, do we not obtain evidence of the necessity and duty of advancing still further—do we not find in all this new motives to exertion and new encouragement. All this is the result of industry and of

knowledge; and it is knowledge and industry which our School is intended to promote. Excuse me if I venture to say that those who do not sympathise with our efforts, and endeavour to assist them, are betraying a sacred trust. If they have had themselves the benefit of a higher education—if they have been gifted by Providence with superior intelligence—they are unworthy of such blessings if they do not seek to extend them to others. If one of this class examines himself, and investigates the causes which have contributed to his own mental progress, he will rarely fail to find that he owes much to the study and appreciation of art, as well as of science and of literature. He will be undeserving of the love and esteem of his countrymen, if he does not endeavour to promote the interests of our artizans, and the working classes, by giving them the means of entering into an honorable, and I hope a successful competition, not only among themselves, but with their more distant rivals. We know the advantages which fortune secures to the children of the wealthier classes; even these advantages will be extended by the examples given in this School, and the Drawings, Models, and Instruction that will be afforded. I entreat those parents who are desirous of adding what may not inaptly be termed the decoration of instruction in art, to pursuits more grave and serious, to support an Institution which is intended to diffuse the same advantages to the humbler classes, and thus to elevate the whole moral and social condition of society. Remember that what is taught to the wealthy as an interesting accomplishment, becomes to the artizan and tradesman the means of support and of honest independence. Look closely into the history of mankind, especially in our own time, and among many distinguished contemporaries, and you will find how much renown, what high eminence, what wealth has been gained in all the departments of life by the genius of the humbler classes, happily assisted and fostered by the aid of the more wealthy, though often, even without that assistance. I, therefore, entreat you, not only for the sake of your own families, but for the sake of our fellow-citizens, and for the sake of all our countrymen, to come forward and assist us in creating new elements of strength and of prosperity, by assisting a School intended to promote knowledge and improvement—to promote all practical industry, by giving it a better direction and a stronger impulse.

Look around you in our own city, and see how many trades are carried on which must gain by a better guidance, and by a larger development. Take for instance the trade of a stone cutter—it is an humble pursuit—yet in no other spot of the empire is it more capable of advancement. In our marble quarries we possess the raw material for works of the greatest

beauty and grandeur. I had the satisfaction of exhibiting at the Crystal Palace, an excellent bust of Henry Grattan, in Irish Statuary Marble, executed by an Irish Artist, the late Mr. Kirk.—The Patriot, the Sculptor, and the Material, all were Irish. The able architect of the Houses of Parliament—himself the guide and founder of a School of Architectural Sculpture—would tell us that every quarry in this district might enable us to emulate his decorative works. Of the striking abilities of our workmen in stone, you cannot find happier specimens than in the splendid mansion of my noble friend the Earl of Dunraven, at Adare. I may here be permitted to suggest, how much more efficiently this Chair would have been filled by Lord Dunraven than by me. His scientific acquirements, and practical knowledge, should have directed your attention to him, if you could have prevailed on him to become your first President. His intellectual powers, architectural taste, varied accomplishments, and kindness of character, are too well known among you to render any praise of mine necessary. Lord Dunraven and his excellent father, created and fostered in his own beautiful village of Adare, a School of Sculpture in Stone, and also in Wood. There are works at Adare Manor as perfect in their class as can be seen elsewhere, and the material is no other than our own mountain limestone and our native oak.

Our object is to raise the tradesman into the artist—a more interesting and striking change than the passing of the chrysalis into the butterfly. We must teach the insect to gain its painted wings, and to fly upwards. How often have I felt delighted to trace the elements of high art in simple and unostentatious beginnings! The earliest efforts of the great artist, Canova, are still to be seen, in baskets of fruit and flowers, carved in soft stone, and still decorating the entrance of one of the public hotels at Venice. Comparing this early effort, with the latter and more poetical works of the eminent European Artist, it will be seen what genius and perseverance are able to accomplish: and so it was likewise shown in England. Why then should not Sculptors rise at Limerick, if they receive sound instruction, and are given access to good models. I know not why we should not acquire eminence in art as well as either Foreigners or Englishmen, nor can I think the names of Macarthy or O'Flaherty are less euphonious than that of Grinling Gibbons. Nor does this rest upon mere conjecture. Countrymen of our own have exhibited acquirements in art which may stand comparison with those of other lands. They are, by nature, highly imaginative, and are thence capable of appreciating keenly all that is most beautiful, in painting, sculpture, and architecture. I have heard of observations made by mere Irish peasants, on a statue or a picture, which

shewed a purity of taste not unworthy of the cultivated judgment of artists. But our natural genius for art does not rest upon general assertion ; though I venture again to remind you, that our people are pre-eminently imaginative, and that without a sensitive imagination no great artistic success can be gained. I can give you instances which prove that the Irish are as fully capable of emulating as of appreciating excellence. Let us look to the neighbouring City of Cork, with which it behoves us to enter into a generous rivalry in all things. Cork has shown us the path in which we ought to tread. The origin of the fine arts in that city is interesting and instructive. During the regency, and after the termination of the war, the Pope made a gift to George IV, of an exquisite set of Casts, made from the Antique Statues of the Vatican, which had been substituted for the originals, conveyed to the Louvre, by the revolutionary armies of France. The collection was an unrivalled one, the casts being made from the original statues, and finished by eminent Italian Artists. At that period the Royal Cork Institution had lately been founded, and was endowed with a Parliamentary Grant ; and George IV was fortunately induced to bestow on that Society the Italian Casts. They were deposited at Cork, and with what result ? The seed, it is true, was imported from Rome, but the harvest was reaped in Ireland. The Sculptor, Hogan, arose, who has since earned a European reputation, and displayed powers, happily applied, not only in perpetuating, in marble, the likeness of eminent men, but in the still higher walk of art, in decorating places of worship. Our altars and our monuments stand in proof of the Native Artists genius. But this was not the only vigorous shoot which sprung from the same root. It produced Maclise, the Painter, as well as Hogan, the Sculptor.—Maclise, not only excellent, but pre-eminent, by the inexhaustable fertility of his invention, and brilliant and picturesque in his power of execution. Maclise is now high among the admirable men, who form the Royal Academy, adding constantly to his fame, by an annual succession of most attractive pictures, I can also name Carew, native, I believe of Waterford, whose graceful groups owe their elegant origin, if I am not misinformed, to the teaching of the Royal Dublin Society. If we turn to Galway, we shall find something more excellent there than a Packet Station. The late Sir Martin Shee, the successor to Reynolds, as President of the Royal Academy; whose annual addresses and lectures, proved, that he, like his great predecessor, possessed a high literary, as well as professional, capacity ; and whose exquisite verses also exhibit poetical powers, altogether his own. Our race, then, does not appear to have been born so very remote from the Sun, as to be unsusceptible to the light and the warmth of its rays.

But I dare not omit another, and a still greater, example. I cannot pass over Barry, the contemporary of Reynolds, and who, with more conduct and prudence, would have been the successful rival of Sir Joshua himself. Indeed no one can view his great pictures at the Society of Arts, without being satisfied of the superiority of his creative powers. He emulated the great School of Rome ; whilst Reynolds rarely rose beyond that of Vandyke and of Bologna. Barry's Venus Anadyomene, and his Adam and Eve, are surely superior to The Snake in the Grass. And here, I must be permitted to remind you, how Barry was encouraged and supported. The greatest of Irish Statesmen and Philosophers, was the friend and the adviser of the greatest Irish Artist. The man who lived for all time and space, rather than for the more confined sphere of his own country, however devoted he was to her service ; the illustrious Edmond Bourke, who felt a sympathy for genius of all descriptions, was the protector of Barry, in his struggle with fortune. Standing foremost amongst his great contemporaries, and the greatest of all, the namesake, and the relative of my gallant friend near me, (General Sir Richard Bourke,) shewed how two Irishmen, eminent in different walks of excellence, could labor together, not for low or personal objects—not for selfish ambition—but for all that could raise the moral, intellectual, and religious condition of their countrymen—by improving them in those arts which temper and refine the human heart, and raise them to what is true, by teaching them to admire what is excellent and lovely.

We should greatly err if we did not act in the faith that there was a necessary connection between the arts and moral improvement. Decoration so far from being inconsistent with strength cannot be perfect without it. The expanding Capital on which the entablature rests completes and unites with the well proportioned shaft of the column and its pedestal ; each is indispensable for the others in due place and in just proportion, so it is in the proportion and harmony of all intellectual improvement. I believe it to be one of the dispensations of Almighty Wisdom that we cannot improve any one part of our nature without elevating all. I do not believe it possible to purify and refine the taste without acting through the spiritual nature of man. Can you restore to health an infirm or wounded limb without strengthening the whole human frame ? Our nature is made up of a marvellous succession of dependencies. Man is one, however complex ; he is one in his spiritual and his corporeal existence, and that which exalts and refines him in any degree, tends to refine and exalt him throughout. Let us not therefore dissociate beauty from usefulness, or ornament from strength. Think you that there is less strength in the marvellous vaults of the dome of St. Peter's, because the genius of Michael Angelo and of

Bramante, in lifting the Pantheon into the air, made it as beautiful as it has been enduring? Carry the same investigation through ancient and modern architecture and you come to similar conclusions. What completes beauty imparts strength, and strength gives an additional grace of its own to beauty. You have most of you, I presume, visited the antiquities of Cashel, where strength is displayed which has resisted the progress of decay during centuries. Where, let me ask you, is that strength most visible? It is in Cormac's chapel, where beauty and power are so marvellously united. I believe this to be as true in the mind of man as it is in the works of his hands, and that gracefulness need never be separated from usefulness and durability.

But to pass away from these abstractions to something that may be considered more practical. We must remember that to aid the objects of our new institution there is much to be done by us all. There is work for ladies as well as for men; indeed in art and in taste the former are our best guides and instructors. Let us approach the fulfilment of these duties with faith and spirit. Discouragement is a bar to all success. Permit me to show you what can be done by individual exertion, and that by simple but practical means. The anecdote is one for the truth of which I can myself vouch. A Lady, a near and dear connection of my own, whose name I only withhold, because Ladies' names are not to be irreverently introduced, applied herself with great skill and with excellent sense in instructing the children of the poor in her neighbourhood. She was, herself, an excellent draughtswoman, accomplished in the arts of the needle, and therefore highly qualified for the task she had undertaken. She not only obtained from the Continent the best designs, but ransacked wardrobes and drawers for those ancient relics of lace, which are to be found among the wedding robes and veils of our mothers and grandmothers. From these models she taught her little peasant girls to emulate the taste and industry of former times and of other countries, by perfect and elaborate imitation. She succeeded, and sent most admirable fac similes of Brussels industry into the London fashionable market. It obtained a profitable sale. Many of the most interesting brides of London have hid their blushes under a veil of Currah manufacture. Nor did she sell with those gentle solicitations for charitable sympathy by which ladies know so well how to find purchasers. She went to work in what some would consider the coarser methods of commercial traffic, and what others might perhaps stigmatise as the hard-hearted laws of political economy. She endeavored to produce the best article she could, and she sold as cheaply as she could afford. In fact she was a believer in the principles of Free Trade. At this time it so happened that

the late Queen of the Belgians was on a visit to our gracious Sovereign. Specimens of Lace were sent to the palace by the command of the Queen of the Belgians, and we had the great satisfaction of hearing that a veil of the Currah Lace, executed by Limerick girls, was selected and taken back as a specimen to Brussels, by the royal purchaser. It would be too much of national vanity, if I were to suggest that this was done with the view of improving the manufacture of Brussels. We are accustomed to describe the supposed transmission of coals to Newcastle as an act of folly; but, surely, to send Lace to Brussels, as I have described, was a rare triumph.—The former would be a bad speculation—the latter was attended with a fair profit. The whole was the result of the very species of instruction which it will be one of the objects of our School to give. Correct and beautiful models were sought—graceful designs were copied—and success followed. This seems to me to prove, that if the people of this country are but given the means of cultivating and improving their tastes, there is no reason to doubt, but they may become successful competitors with other nations.

I need hardly remind you, that 'till within the last few years, the manufacture of Irish Cambric, on a large scale, for commerce, would have been considered visionary. But how stands the case now? Why the Cambrics of Lurgan are sold at Cambray itself; and many a fine lady who purchases her embroidered handkerchief on the Continent, will be surprised to learn that her laced ornament is the work of an Ulster loom. I should recommend such lovers of foreign luxuries to enquire at home; but only on the condition of making their purchases as cheaply, and of as good a quality, in Ireland as at Paris. It is on such conditions only, that the resources of any country can be truly developed, and brought into extended consumption.

I must apologise for the length of this Address. But the duty has been cast upon me, and the subject is near my heart. Allow me to say, in conclusion, that I hope and believe, in assisting the School we are met to found, we are undertaking not only as a work economically useful, and commercially profitable, but a work which recommends itself on grounds moral and religious.—I trust that we may teach the young to turn to better account, than they now do the faculties which God has given them. I trust we may teach them to employ better, as well as more profitably, time now unprofitably wasted. The connection between industry, happiness, and virtue is not remote. Indeed the objects we have in view involve considerations higher still. The Greeks, our masters in all that relates to the arts, con-

sidered that there was an identity between that which is good, that which is fair, and that which is true. May this be exemplified among our scholars. I cannot conceive anything which will more engage their youthful minds, give them more innocent pleasure, and at the same time tend to raise them in the social state, than by combining with the branches of instruction they will receive elsewhere, the instruction this institution proposes to give.

Let me entreat, my friends, of the Committee of Management, to persevere in their duties. Let me not hear of attendance neglected—of meetings fruitlessly called. But let your Secretary report, in calling on me, from time to time, for any services you may command, that the Committee and Managers are indefatigable in their exertions, and that their zeal on the opening of the School of Design, has proved but an earnest of their continued and successful exertions.

The thanks of the Meeting having been given to the Noble Chairman, on the motion of the Lord Bishop of Limerick, seconded by Wyndham Goold, Esq., M.P., and carried by acclamation, the Meeting separated.

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